

Plaza Hotel
1553 North Clark Street;
southeast corner of North Clark
Street and West North Avenue
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1055

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
57-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

PLAZA HOTEL

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- Location: 1553 North Clark Street; southeast corner of North Clark Street and West North Ave.; Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.
- Present Owner: Park Plaza Hotel Company.
- Present Use: First floor: lobby, stores, and restaurant; upper floors: hotel rooms and apartments.
- Statement of Significance: The building is an example of the work of the Chicago architect Clinton J. Warren, ". . . the acknowledged leader among the architects of hotels and apartments. . ." /Carl W. Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 151/. The building is distinguished for the formal simplicity of its orange-brick exterior. Three large cubic masses are articulated by a regular rhythm of projecting cylindrical forms and bay-windows.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 82, 83, 86, 87, 90, 91, 94, 95, 98 in Burton's Subdivision of the northpart of lot 14 in Branson's Addition to Chicago in the northeast one-quarter Section 4-39-14. Recorded September 12, 1844.

The following is based on the complete chain of title contained in Book 428, pp. 338-340, in the Cook County Recorder's Office: The property is first recorded as being owned by Ben Burton and wife, who sold it to Cab F. Gates on May 29, 1873 (Document 105598). Clinton J. Warren gained control of the land from Mary E. Gates et al. on October 15, 1891 (Document 1552487). On October 10, 1895, Warren et al. transferred the title to the Plaza Co. (corp.) (Document 2290018); from there it went to Emily B. Hopkins on November 11, 1896 (Documents 2462683-4). In a series of transactions, dated December 30, 1908, the property passed from Hopkins to Fayette W. Reed, to Chicago Title and Trust Company, to Julius Manger (Documents 4308492-5). Julius Manger passed the title on to William Manger (Document 4309215, January 2, 1909), who later transferred it to the Plaza Hotel Co. (Document 4421632,

August 12, 1909). The ownership was taken over by the Park Plaza Hotel Co. on October 7, 1947 (Document 14161877); they are the present owners, as of October 25, 1962 (Document 18628324).

2. Date of erection: 1892.
3. Architect: Clinton J. Warren. (See Supplementary Material for biographical notes on the architect.)
4. Original plan and construction of building: From the original Building Permit, # 4110, dated November 13, 1891, in Book 14, Northwest and Southwest, July 1891 - April 1894, p. 37, in the Department of Buildings, Chicago: "Clinton J. Warren, 8 stories, stores and apartments, 225' front, 100' deep, -- high, 646/62 N. Clark, \$152.50 -- amt. for permit."

Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. p. 132: "8 stories and 1 basement high, on spread foundation."

Condit, op. cit., p. 154: "The Plaza Hotel erected in 1892 at 1553 North Clark Street, follows closely the plan, exterior form, and general functional arrangement of the two Michigan Avenue buildings. The whole structure is divided into three equal blocks separated by narrow courts extending through the depth of the building. The cylindrical projections of the corners are repeated six times along the length of the facade, forming the dominant feature of the exterior design. The uniformity and regularity of the street elevations make this hotel one of Warren's best. . ."

5. Alterations and additions: The building is essentially intact, with only minor mechanical changes. The first floor lobby is largely original: However, the northwest corner has been completely altered by the addition of a small restaurant.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The hotel is located at the northwest corner of the Gold Coast area of Chicago, at the southern edge of Lincoln Park. For many years, the building was a fashionable residence for prominent Chicagoans.

C. Bibliography:

- Condit, Carl W. The Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. p. 154, Fig. 115.
- Gilbert, Paul and Bryson, Charles Lee. Chicago and Its Makers. Chicago: Felix Mendelsohn, Publisher, 1929. p. 522.
Photograph.
- Industrial Chicago. Vol. 1. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891. p. 618.
Biographical sketch of C. J. Warren.
- Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. p. 132.
- Tallmadge, Thomas E. Architecture in Old Chicago. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941. p. 201.

D. Supplementary Material:

1. Industrial Chicago. Vol. 1. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891. p. 618:

"Clinton J. Warren, a distinguished architect, is located at 84 and 86 LaSalle Street, and his plans have been followed in many of the best buildings in Chicago. He is yet a comparatively young man, but already ranks very high among his professional brethren. He came to Chicago from the East in 1879 and entered the office of Burnham & Root, where, for six years, he studied diligently to learn the art of architecture. In 1886, having fitted himself thoroughly for his life's work, he began business on his own account at 115 Dearborn street . . . Mr. Warren has been in business for himself for four years and the large amount of work he has turned out and its general excellence attest to his genius. He was born in 1860 and therefore has the best part of his life yet to live. Unquestionably the future will place him high on the list of Chicago's architects."

Other buildings by Warren include: Virginia Hotel, Rush and Ohio, 10 stories; Church of our Savior, Fullerton Ave.; Roundhouse - Burlington and Northern R.R.; depots for Chicago and Rock Island R.R.; residences in Morgan Park; apartment house, Rush and Ohio, 7 stories; Metropole Hotel, 22nd and Michigan Ave., 8 stories; Aldrich Hotel, 47th and Lake Avenue; Fairbanks Hotel, 21st and Michigan, 10 stories; Unity Building, 16 stories; and many minor structures and remodeling projects.

2. Tallmadge, Thomas E. Architecture in Old Chicago. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941. p. 201:

"... The architect/ of the Unity Building/ was Clinton J. Warren, who learned his trade in the office of Burnham and Root. Beside the Unity he was the architect for the famous Virginia Hotel that used to stand on the north-west corner of Ohio and Rush. He built the majority of houses in Morgan Park, the Church of Our Savior on Fullerton Avenue, and many stations for both the Burlington and Rock Island Railroads."

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka
Historian
National Park Service
J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
October, 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A typical late 19th century Chicago hotel by Clinton J. Warren. A simple tripartite architectural mass with a regular rhythm of projecting cylindrical forms and bay windows.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories and bays: Eight stories; on the west front there are three units each consisting of 2 projecting bays and an oriel at each corner. (The projecting bays exist only through the seventh floor.) These units are separated by a light well. A connecting link exists at the rear (east of the three units). The north elevation is six bays plus the west corner oriel. Alternate bays project on the north elevation.
2. Layout, shape: Three square units.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: First floor has large display windows set in large rectangular blocks of sandstone with deep raked mortar joints. Above the first floor the wall material is a deep redish-orange face brick. String course at sill of floors two, four, six and eight. The bays end at the eighth floor string course: brick

corbel table creates a shallow cornice above brick dentils. Some bays at seventh floor are ornamented with swags; the eighth floor, which has no bays except corner oriels, has heavy swag-ornament below cornice and around windows.

4. Structural system: Skeleton frame.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Entrances to the building are located at the first floor on the north, and between the north and central units on the west. Additional shop entrances exist on the west. Entrance doors are wooden stiles and rails each with a large single glass panel.
- b. Windows: Display windows in shops on first floor. Mostly one-over-one-light double-hung windows throughout remainder of building.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flat, built-up.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Corbeled brick cornice on brackets over brick dentils.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Mechanical equipment and storage.
- b. First floor: Restaurant, shops and hotel lobby.
- c. Floors two through eight: Hotel rooms.

2. Stairways: There are three stairways, one in each unit of the building. Two passenger elevators, and one freight elevator exist in the north unit off of the hotel lobby.

3. Flooring: Mosaic tile in hotel lobby. Carpet in corridors and guest rooms of upper floors.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster. Marble wainscot in hotel lobby.

5. Decorative Features and trim: First floor interior columns are square with marble facing and Ionic capitals. The structural bays of the hotel lobby are articulated with recessed panels having plaster relief. In elevation, these bays are accented by arches between the columns.

6. Lighting: Electrical.
7. Heating: Central.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The hotel is located on the southeast corner of West North Avenue and North Clark Street, an area undergoing extensive urban renewal.

Prepared by J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
September, 1964